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HENRY JAMES

The Turn of the Screw



The Turn of the Screw

Henry James



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about the author

Born in New York City in 1843, Henry James lived in Europe while he was growing up. In 1860 he returned to America and attended Harvard University Law School. In 1869 he returned to England permanently, although many of his critics and friends have said that he was a real American.

Because he had lived both in Europe and in the United States, Henry James began to write what have been called "international novels." In these stories, the main characters often live outside their native lands. *Daisy Miller*, *Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Ambassadors* are perhaps the best examples of this kind of novel. *The Turn of the Screw*, on the other hand, is a sort of mystery/supernatural story that makes the reader ask questions, but does not give many answers in return.

Henry James died in 1916 at the age of seventy-three. Although he died in England, he is considered an American novelist, and he ranks among the best writers of the nineteenth century.

The Turn of the Screw

Henry James



Mrs. Grose



Peter Quint



The master



Miles and Flora

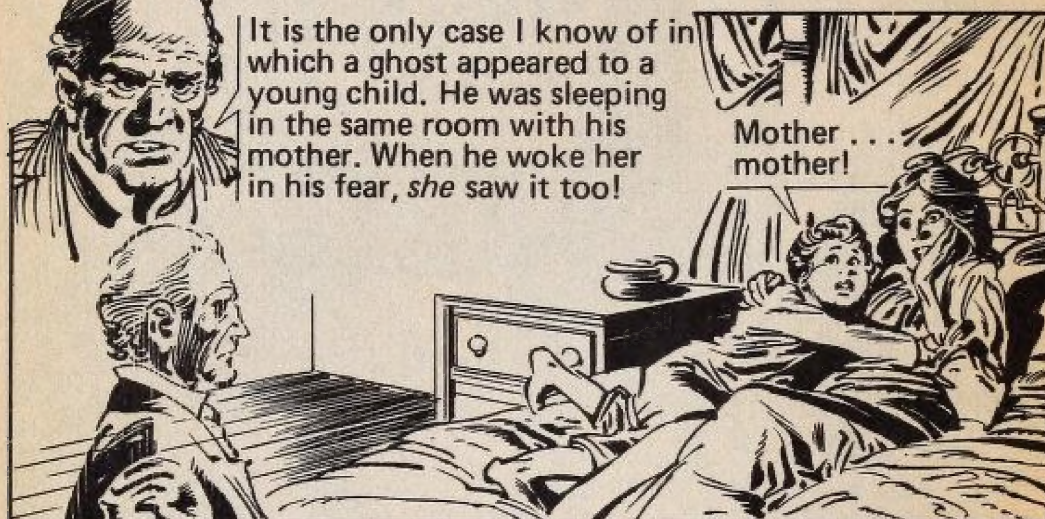


The governess

The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw

I've never told this story before.



Tell us!
Begin!

I can't begin yet.
The story's written down and locked up. I must send to my home for it.



Douglas sent for the manuscript. Three nights later, the group gathered again to hear it.



The lady who wrote this was my sister's governess. She's dead now.

I was at home from college when she first told me the story.

I've never told this to anyone before.



POCKET CLASSICS

She had gone to London to find a job as a governess.



A handsome man talked to her about the children she would be caring for.

I am their uncle—the only relative these children have left.

Yes . . .
I see!



I've sent them to my country house to live. There are servants enough, and a housekeeper. But a governess, a young lady like you, must be in charge.



The young lady we had before you is dead. We need someone else right away.

The Turn of the Screw

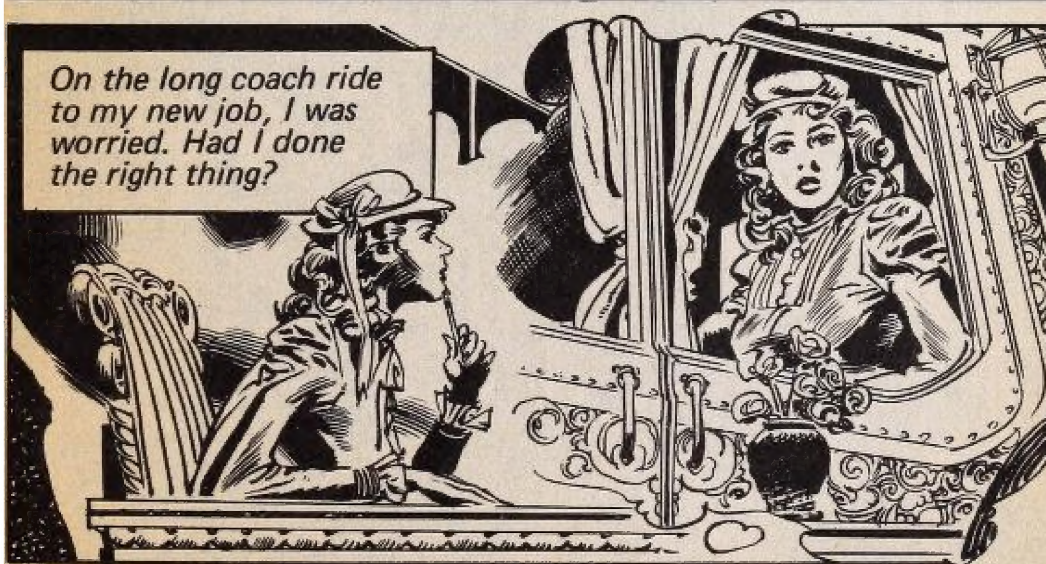
I have only one rule for you to follow. Never bother me. Never write to me. I am too busy!



That is a big job, but I will do it!



Now I will read the story . . . in her own words.



On the long coach ride to my new job, I was worried. Had I done the right thing?

POCKET CLASSICS



I was welcomed by the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, and one of my students, little Flora.

Oh, ma'am . . . I am so glad you've come!



What a lovely child!

Come, we will show you to your room!



The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS

*The next day
Flora showed
me the rest
of the house.*



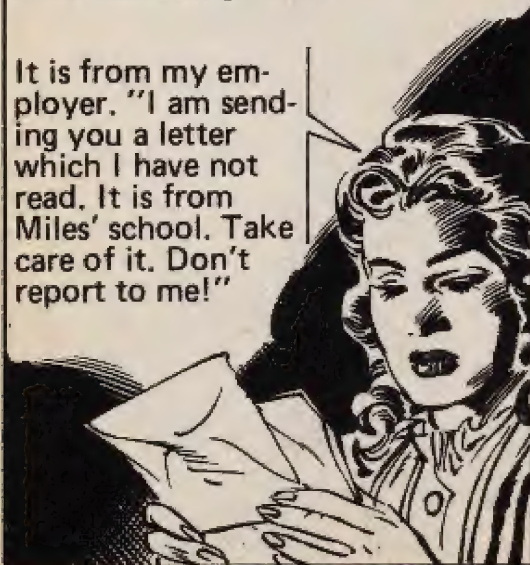
*What a nice way to
become friends!*

*It's like a fairy-
tale palace! And
to think I am
in charge of it!*



*But the evening mail brought
me a disturbing letter.*

*It is from my em-
ployer. "I am send-
ing you a letter
which I have not
read. It is from
Miles' school. Take
care of it. Don't
report to me!"*



*The letter gave me a sleepless
night!*

*The school is sending Miles
home—and they will not take
him back again!*



The Turn of the Screw

The next morning I talked with Mrs. Grose.

Miles' school will not take him back again! Is he really *bad*?

What do they say? What has he done?



They don't say. It can only mean they think him bad for the other boys.

That's not so! He's only ten years old!



Wait until you see him, Miss! Then believe it if you can! You might as well believe it of Flora!

Then you've never known him to be bad?



Well, he's been naughty, of course. That's natural.

You like a boy with spirit! So do I!



POCKET CLASSICS

While I was at it, I wanted to know something else.

Tell me about the governess who was here before me.

She was young and pretty, Miss... like you! That's the way he likes them.



He? Whom do you mean?

Why... the master, of course. Who else?



She was young and pretty, but she died! What did she die of?

I don't know, Miss.



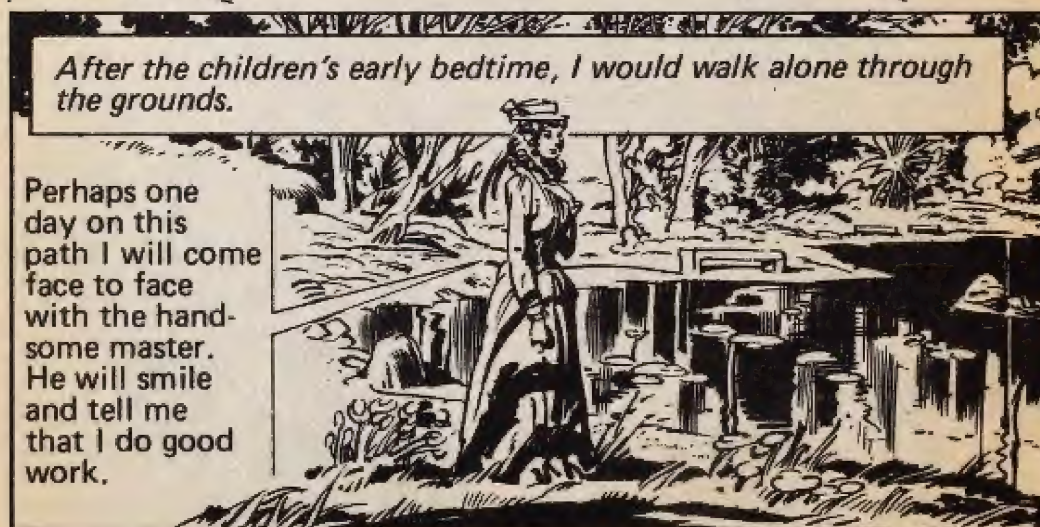
She went home for a short holiday and never came back. I heard she was dead. Please, Miss... I must get back to my work!



The Turn of the Screw



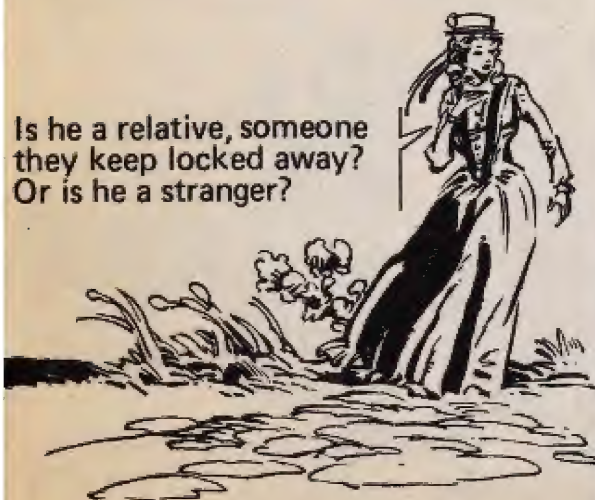
POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw



Then he moved away. I walked for a long time, not knowing what to think.



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw

One afternoon I was alone outdoors with Flora.

We agreed that night that we would face this thing together. And I thought I could do anything to protect my dear children!



Shall we call the lake the Sea of Azof?

Yes!

There's someone else here. I know it.



Then I looked up and saw a woman!



I looked at Flora. The child had turned her back!



But Flora knows she is there—I can *feel* it! And she doesn't want *me* to see or know!

POCKET CLASSICS



Yes, that was Miss Jessel. She and Quint were *both* evil.



The Turn of the Screw

Both of them? Miss Jessel means to get hold of Flora! You must tell me the whole thing now.



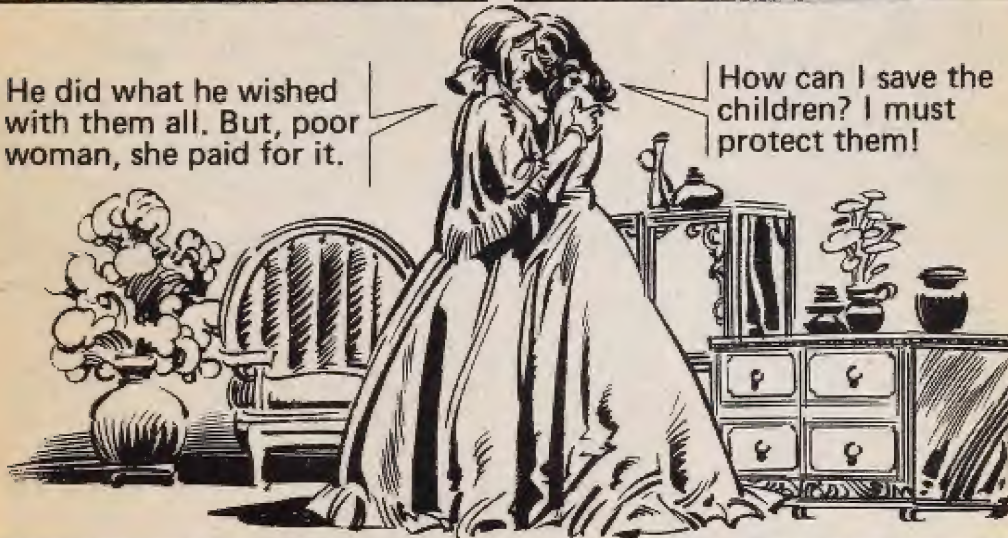
Was there something between Quint and Miss Jessel?

There was *everything* between them, even though she was a lady and he was so far below her!



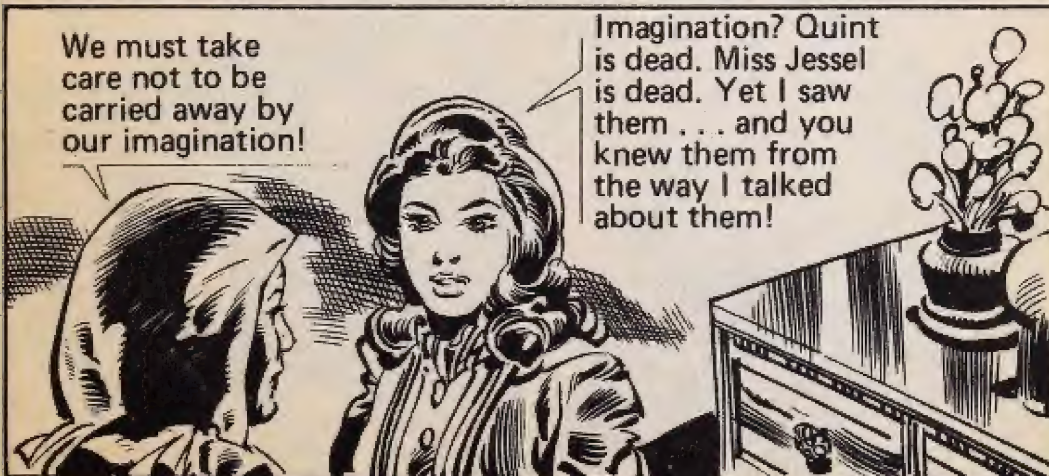
He did what he wished with them all. But, poor woman, she paid for it.

How can I save the children? I must protect them!

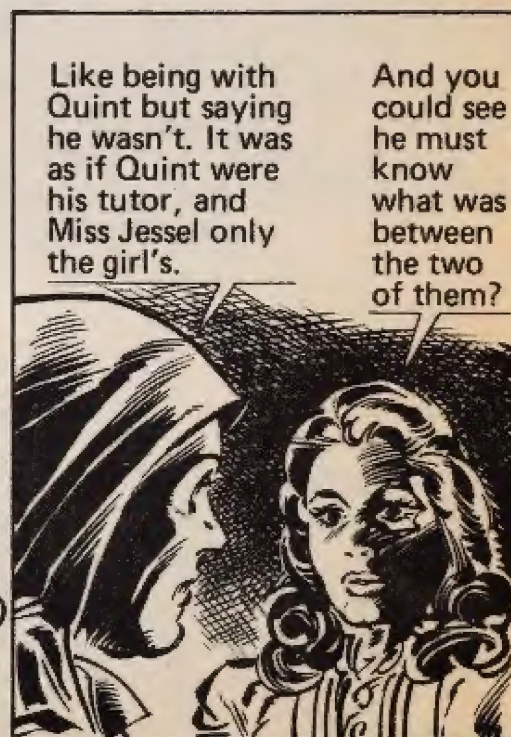


We must take care not to be carried away by our imagination!

Imagination? Quint is dead. Miss Jessel is dead. Yet I saw them . . . and you knew them from the way I talked about them!



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw



Never had I loved them so much. Never had they worked so hard to please me! Their lessons were perfect.

Miles, that is wonderful! Exactly right.



They put on little plays for me. Sometimes they were animals.

Grrr-rrr!

What a good tiger you are!



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw

Then there came a night an hour after which there was nothing but suffering for me. I was sitting up late, reading.

Something is wrong. I can feel it!



Silently I put down my book, went into the hall, and locked the door behind me.



Something drew me toward the stairs.



Suddenly my candle went out! But in the dawn light I saw a figure below.



POCKET CLASSICS

It was Quint! I knew it! Then he turned and disappeared.



I returned to my room, and then I was frightened!



I heard a sound, and Flora came to me from the window.

You naughty one ... where have you been? I heard something.

I thought I heard something.



Before I knew it, I was explaining to her! But I felt sure she lied to me.

You thought I was walking outside?

Well, I thought someone was!



The Turn of the Screw

After that I stayed up and watched at night as long as I could stay awake.



I walked quietly through the dark halls.



I didn't see Quint again. But one night I saw someone else.

It is Miss Jessel! How sad she looks!



On the eleventh night I was worn out. I fell asleep early. Suddenly I awoke as if a hand had shaken me.

Someone has put out my candle! Flora?



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw



I hurried to a room under the tower. I looked out onto the lawn.

Miles! He is looking at something above me. It must be Quint!



I went downstairs and outside. Miles came straight to me.



Not a word was said between us as I led him back to his room.

Now you must tell me the truth. Why did you go out?

If I tell you, will you understand?

POCKET CLASSICS

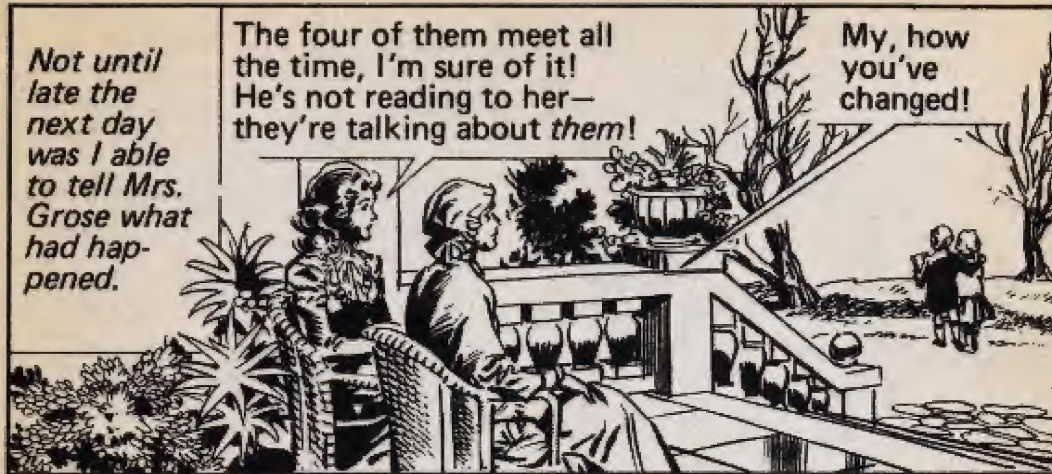


I worked it out
with Flora. She
was to look out
for me and wake
you up so you
would look and
see me!

Which I did,
while you
caught cold in
the night air!



The Turn of the Screw



Do? They can kill them! They're always seen *across*, and *beyond* things—in dangerous places!



POCKET CLASSICS

They're on the tops of towers, the roofs of houses, outside windows, across lakes—always suggesting danger.



Tempting the children to come to them?

To make them die trying! Unless we can keep it from happening.



Their uncle must stop all this! You must send for him, Miss!

Write him that the children are mad? Or that I am? My job was not to worry him!



I had been so proud of living up to the master's rules. I did not like to fail.

Never! And if you should write to him yourself, I would leave on the spot!

Yes, Miss. Very well!



The Turn of the Screw

I tried, but I could never bring myself to talk to the children about what was on my mind.

It was Miles who brought things into the open, as we walked to church one Sunday.

A touch of frost last night! Summer has turned into fall!

Look here, when in the world, please, am I going back to school?

A fellow my age shouldn't be with a lady all the time—not even such a nice lady!

Yes . . . I see! Were you very happy at school?

I'm happy enough anywhere. But I want to learn more and to be with my own sort.

There aren't many of those, Miles!

POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw

I hurried back to the empty house. The servants, too, were at church.

There is so much to do. I must pack quickly!



I sank down on the bottom stair.

Let me think, now.



No! This is where *she* sat . . . that horrible woman!



I pulled myself together. I went on up the stairs and headed for the schoolroom to gather my things.

I opened the door.

Someone's here!



POCKET CLASSICS

Miss Jessel was there, sitting at my table. But it had been her table too!

Oh, no,
no, no!



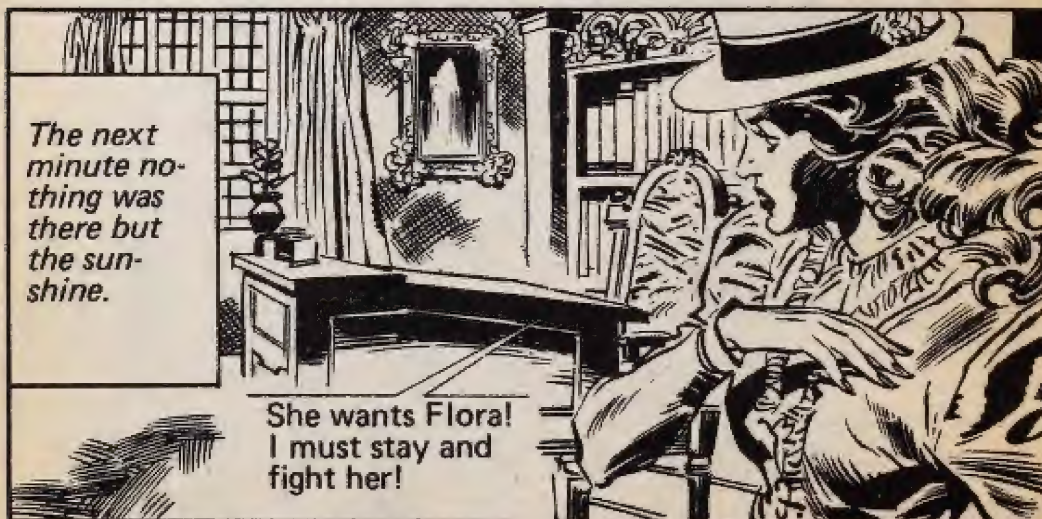
*Slowly she
rose. She
seemed to
challenge
me!*

You terrible
woman!

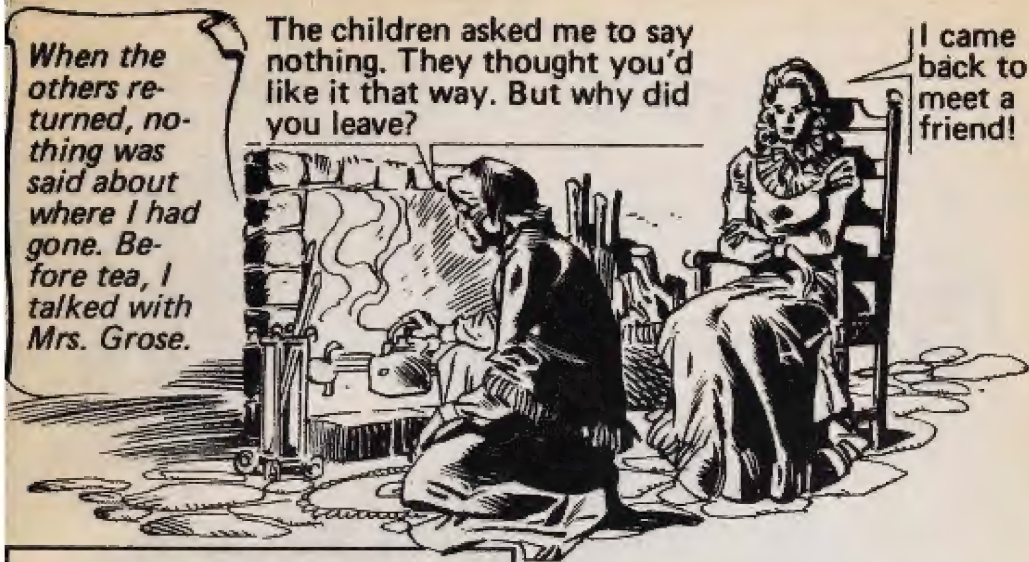


*The next
minute no-
thing was
there but
the sun-
shine.*

She wants Flora!
I must stay and
fight her!



The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS

But you won't tell him about the letter from the school?

I must! Miles is so perfect otherwise. He must be evil—or under evil influence!



After all, it's their uncle's fault if he left such people in charge here!



Very well, Miss. Whatever you do, write to him!

Yes, I will. Tonight!



The weather changed. I listened to the wind and the rain.

Yes, I must write. But what do I say?



The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS

No. I lie awake and think . . .
of *you*, of course, and
of this strange business
of ours.



I think about the way you
bring me up. And all the rest!



All the rest? What do you
mean? You can go back to
school, but not to the old one.



How could I know
you wanted to go
when you've never
said anything about
your school to me?

Haven't I?
I want to
get away!



The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS



The Turn of the Screw

The next morning my students did wonderful work.



After their lessons, Mrs. Grose found a moment to speak to me.

Have you written, Miss?

Yes, I've written.

I didn't tell her that the letter was still in my pocket.

After lunch. . . .

Would you like me to play the piano for you?

Yes, I would.



POCKET CLASSICS

Miles' playing was perfect. For half an hour I sat and dreamed.



Suddenly I started up!

Where is Flora all this time?

Why, my dear, how do I know?



I rushed to my room.

Flora! She isn't here!



I looked into the other nearby rooms.

Nor here!



The Turn of the Screw

I ran to the housekeeper's room.

She must be with Mrs. Grose!



But she wasn't.

Isn't Flora here with you?

No! I thought she was with you!



We left to question the maids. Then we met again in the hall.

The maids have not seen her.

No one has seen her. She must be upstairs!



No. She has gone out with that woman—Miss Jessel!

Out? With her?



POCKET CLASSICS

And where
is Master
Miles?

Oh, *he's* with Quint!
In the schoolroom.
It was a trick—a
clever plan—and it
worked!

I'll leave my letter for a ser-
vant to take to the village.
I must find Flora!



You must put
something on!
It's damp and
cold outside!

I can't wait
for that.
Come with
me now . . .
or stay here
with *them*!



Poor,
frightened
Mrs. Grose
followed
me. I led
her straight
to the lake.

There's no
one in
sight!

She has gone
across in the
boat!



The Turn of the Screw



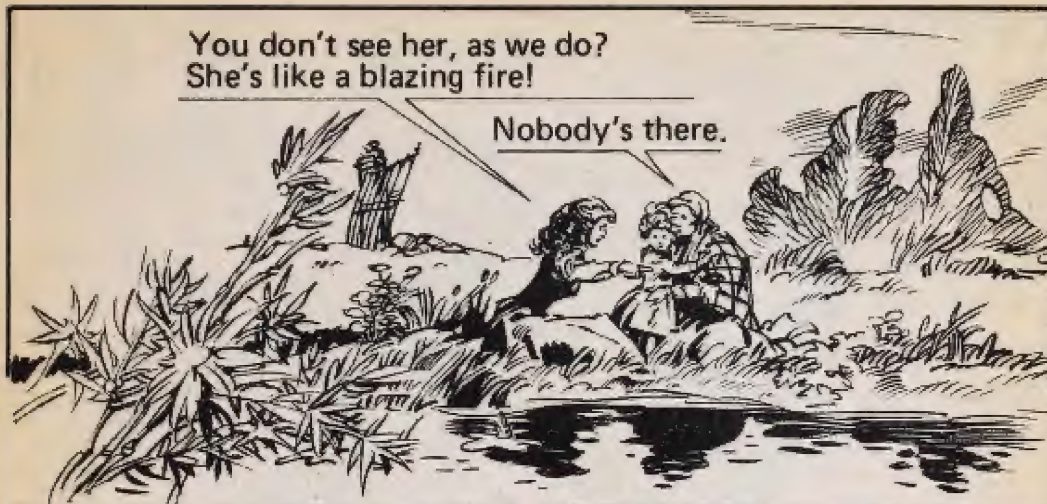
We came to the bank on the other side. There was a fence, and a gate, and then. . .



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The Turn of the Screw



POCKET CLASSICS

I could feel the person from across the lake. The words were coming to Flora from her!

I got in the way,
and so I've lost
you. I've done
my best, Flora.



I stayed by the lake and cried.

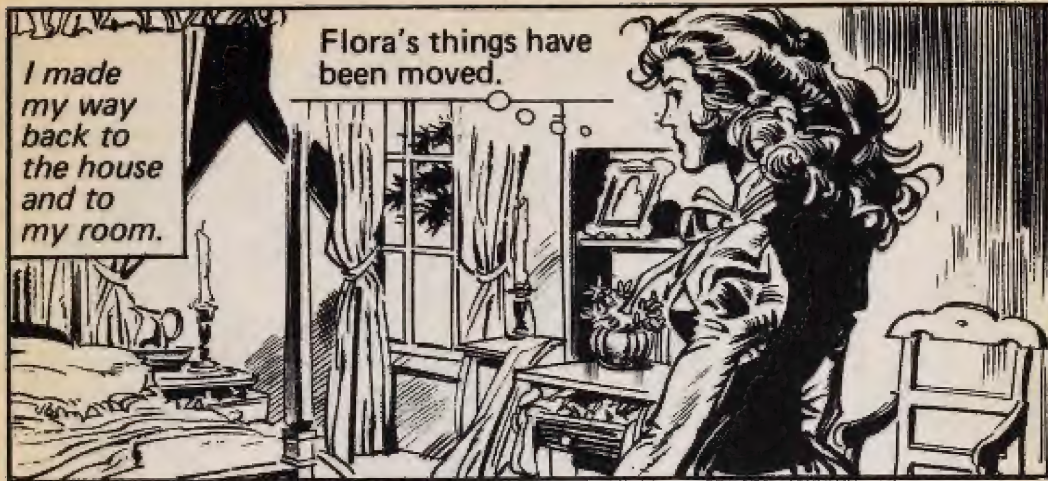


Much later, I looked up.

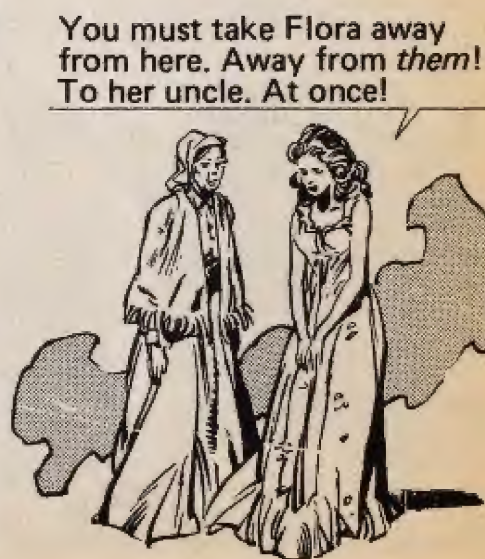
How long have I been
here? It is almost night!



The Turn of the Screw



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The Turn of the Screw



Then I'll go this morning!



Then in spite of yesterday, you still believe me?

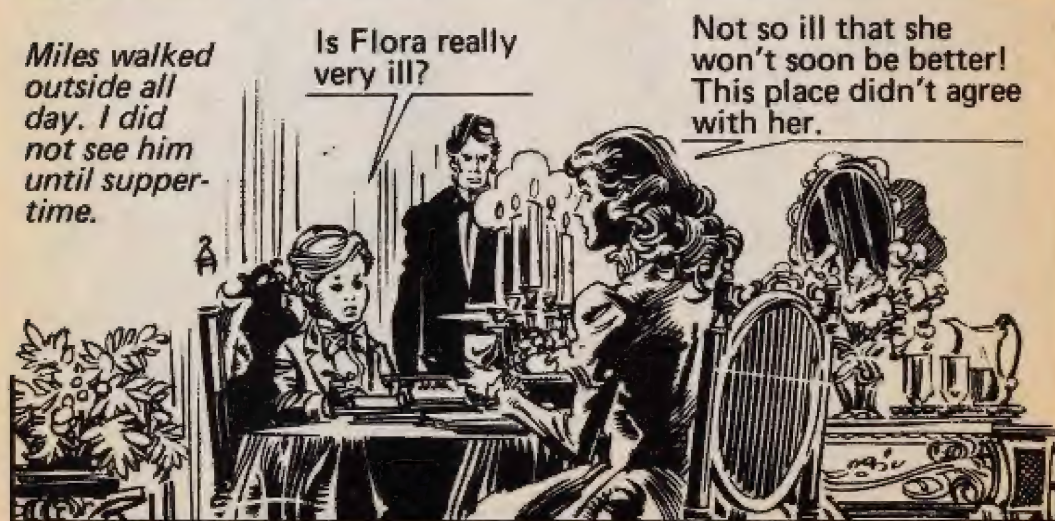
Yes, Miss. I didn't see anything. But the horrors I've heard from that child—I believe!

One thing: my letter to their uncle will have reached town before you.

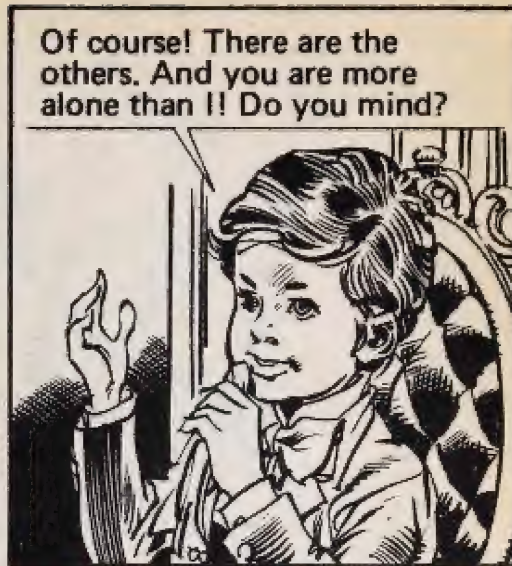
Your letter never went! It's gone, but the servants never touched it!



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The Turn of the Screw



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Like a stroke of lightning, Quint's face appeared outside the window. I grabbed Miles, and kept his face turned away.

Yes, I took it to see what you said about me.



Suddenly Quint's face was gone! Had I won?

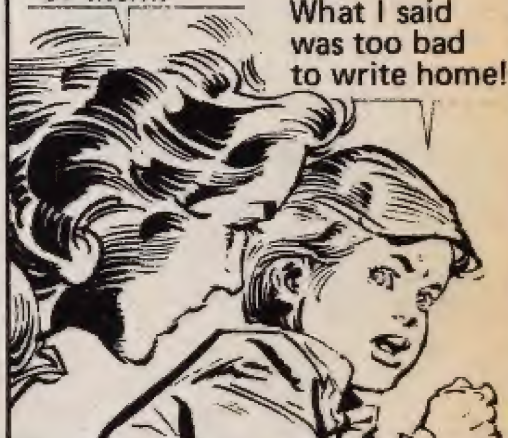
Is that what you did at school? Did you take letters—or other things?

Did I *steal*? No! I said things to the ones I liked.



And the teachers heard of them?

Yes, but I didn't think they'd tell. What I said was too bad to write home!



The battle was still on! Quint's face came back again. I grabbed Miles. I could feel his heart pounding.

No! No! He won't have you!

Is *he* here? Let me see!



The Turn of the Screw



Whom do you mean by "he?"

Peter Quint—that devil! Where is he?



Miles had said it! I had won! And the face was gone from the window, this time forever!

Look! Look! What does he matter now?

Miles turned, saw nothing, and fell backward, unconscious.



I have you!

I have won!



But to my horror I suddenly realized that I had lost. Miles' heart had stopped beating—forever.

THE END



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- C 8 The Red Badge of Courage
- C 9 The Time Machine
- C10 Tom Sawyer
- C11 Treasure Island
- C12 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
- C13 The Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
- C14 Gulliver's Travels
- C15 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
- C16 The Invisible Man
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- C18 Kidnapped
- C19 The Mysterious Island
- C20 The Scarlet Letter
- C21 The Story of My Life
- C22 A Tale of Two Cities
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- C24 The War of the Worlds
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- C56 The Mutiny on Board H.M.S. Bounty**
- C57 The Odyssey**
- C58 Oliver Twist**
- C59 Pride and Prejudice**
- C60 The Turn of the Screw**

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- S 3 Julius Caesar**
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- S 5 Macbeth**
- S 6 The Merchant of Venice**
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- S 9 Romeo and Juliet**
- S10 The Taming of the Shrew**
- S11 The Tempest**
- S12 Twelfth Night**



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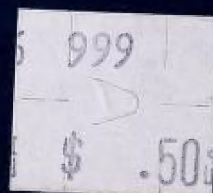
The Turn of the Screw

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